

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY VIENNA PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 244372

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SREF, AU, IS, UR

SUBJECT:TRANSIT OF SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRANTS THROUGH AUSTRIA

1. ON NOVEMBER 4, 1974, DR. LUDWIG STEINER, VISITING DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUSTRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, DISCUSSED WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY JOHN A. ARMITAGE THE TRANSIT OF SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRANTS THROUGH AUSTRIA. DR. STEINER REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S STRONG CONCERN THAT VIENNA'S PRESENT TRANSIT FACILITIES WOULD BECOME SEVERELY OVERTAXED IF LAST YEAR'S NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS (33,000) WERE TO DOUBLE. HE SAID THAT THE PROBLEM IS NOT A MATTER OF FINANCING; THE CRITICAL QUESTIONS INVOLVE SPACE AND SECURITY.

2. MR, ARMITAGE REPEATED THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT
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CLARIFICATION THAT THERE HAS NOT BEEN ANY SOVIET COMMITMENT

INVOLVING A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS. IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT INCREASES CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, HE AGREED WITH DR. STEINER THAT SUPPLEMENTAL ROUTES SHOULD PROBABLY BE CONSIDERED.

3. WHEN ASKED BY STEINER WHETHER ISRAEL HAD LOOKED INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT FLIGHTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION, MR. ARMITAGE SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE ISRAELIS HAD MADE

SOME OVERTURES, BUT HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY RESPONSE. SHOULD THE SOVIETS AGREE TO THIS METHOD, SAID MR. ARMITAGE, AMONG THE DETAILS WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE RESOLVED WOULD BE THE QUESTION OF WHO WOULD HANDLE THE TRANSPORTATION. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CHARTERING OF SOME FOREIGN CARRIER LIKE AUSTRIAN AIRLINES WOULD BE ONE POSSIBILITY. DR. STEINER DID NOT THINK HIS COUNTRY'S AIRLINE HAD THE NECESSARY CAPACITY. MR. ARMITAGE OBSERVED THAT THE AIRLINE INVOLVED MIGHT BECOME A TARGET FOR TERRORIST RETRIBUTION ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

4. WHEN ASKED BY MR. ARMITAGE WHETHER THE AUSTRIANS HAD APPROACHED ISRAEL ABOUT ALTERNATE ROUTING, DR. STEINER REPLIED THAT THEY HAD NOT.

5. IN CLOSING, DR. STEINER MENTIONED THE STUBBORN WELFARE PROBLEM CAUSED BY THE 200-300 FORMER JEWISH EMIGRANTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION WHO ARE NOW VEGETATING IN VIENNA, WAITING FOR PERMISSION TO RETURN TO THE USSR. IN SPITE OF ENERGETIC AUSTRIAN DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE IN THEIR BEHALF, THE USSR REFUSES TO ACCEPT THEM "BECAUSE OF THE SOVIET HOUSING SHORTAGE." INGERSOLL

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